

Job Aid: Tips For Working Effectively With the News Media

The questions below can help you assess and enhance your working relationships with the news media.

Questions To Ask Yourself	Tips To Improve Working Relationships
<p>Do you know this reporter and the media outlet?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How knowledgeable is the reporter of emergency management and incident management concepts? How experienced is the reporter (i.e., is this the reporter's usual beat or a new assignment; has he or she worked similar incidents in the past)? Is the reporter generally accurate and unbiased? Is the media outlet generally positive or negative toward your department or the topic? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know who covers your beat. Maintain regular contact so you are aware of staff changes and know who is assigned to your department. Educate the reporters who cover your department. Use "ride-alongs" and other opportunities before an incident occurs to ensure reporters fully understand how your department works. Monitor the media regularly. Be aware of patterns of inaccuracy or perceived biases and address them as appropriate. Repeated mistakes involving your department on the part of one reporter might warrant a phone call and offer of a ride along or tour. Editorials or a pattern of articles with a slant against your department or emergency management concepts may require more attention, such as an editorial board meeting.
<p>Do you understand the general needs of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Print media? Television? Radio? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Print media want lots of information, details, and background; will usually use multiple sources in the same piece; may take longer to produce a lengthier, more indepth article. Television works "in the here and now" and wants visuals and short sound bites. Radio also wants sound bites—likes background sound or atmosphere to paint a picture, but will do interviews over the phone. Provide all types of media with equal access to information, but keep in mind that some news media will be better suited to conveying certain types of information. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic media typically gets information out to the public more quickly than print media. Print media may be better able to convey complex or very detailed information.
<p>Do you know how to work with this particular media outlet?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have up-to-date and complete contact information? Do you know programming schedules and deadlines? Do you know how they prefer to receive news releases? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep current on all the information that will allow you to work effectively with each news media outlet during an incident. In particular, you will need to know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact names and numbers, including information for after-hours and weekend contact. Programming schedules for the newsroom (including weekend coverage). Deadlines. Preferred way to receive news releases (maintain current fax numbers and e-mail addresses).